



**OFFICE OF STATE TAX COMMISSIONER**  
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

Rick Clayburgh  
TAX COMMISSIONER

November 6, 2001

SENT VIA FACSIMILE  
202-456-2461

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Tax Commissioner for the State of North Dakota, I am keenly aware of the impact of good farm policy and its relationship to sales of farm equipment and supplies. Each quarter we track those sales as an economic indicator of how things are going in the farm communities across the state. For a number of quarters the farm economy has been limping along.

Since agriculture is our number one industry in North Dakota it is critical that we have a good farm program. A healthy agricultural sector is vitally important to the overall health of the nation's economy. Farm related businesses that are agriculturally dependent have felt the blow of a tough farm economy, and one by one businesses are forced to close. Our small towns have felt the pinch of businesses closing and they too are having a difficult time in maintaining a viable community and local services.

Our farmers prefer a farm program that gives them the flexibility of planting for the market and not being tied to crop bases. This needs to be continued in a farm policy package so farmers are not forced to plant crops that are in surplus just to qualify for program benefits. Another critical element of new farm legislation needs to be a continuation of target price payments and a solid price support program so farmers will be supported when commodity prices decline.

Over the years farmers have been faced with natural disasters, low commodity prices and foreign trade practices that place us at a disadvantage in world markets. There just hasn't been a reliable and consistent way to help farmers who have poor quality crops due to disease, weather or pests. In recent years emergency disaster bills have helped make up the difference in lost income due to poor crop quality and low yields. But farmers are concerned that emergency funds will not always be available.

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It is extremely important that a crop quality adjustment is included as part of our farm policy, so that farmers no longer need to rely on annual emergency legislation by Congress.

With the talk of an economic stimulus package in the works for our nation I encourage you to give the Secretary of Agriculture the green light on passing a farm bill this year.

This is a message of our Governor John Hoeven and I join with him in support for passing a farm bill this year. For our state a long-term farm bill would go a long way in giving farmers the confidence they need to continue investing in the farm business and the future. Farmers need to be assured that there is a program available to help them shore up their incomes when crop yields don't measure up to market standards and commodity prices fall.

You can have a major impact on maintaining confidence in our farm communities by leading the effort to craft a meaningful farm bill this year before Congress adjourns.

Sincerely,



Rick Clayburgh  
Tax Commissioner

CC: The Honorable John Hoeven